

ST. ANDREW'S PRIORY

Historical Sketch



QUEEN EMMA

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FOR NEARLY NINETY years St. Andrew's Priory School for Girls has stood for education in the ideals of Christian womanhood. It is only fitting that the lives of two great women should be woven inextricably into the fabric of her story. These two dedicated Christian women are Queen Emma Kaleleonalani, consort of King Kamehameha IV of Hawaii, and Priscilla Lydia Sellon, mother foundress of the Society of the Most Holy Trinity in Devonshire, England.

In 1855 the ruling monarch of the Hawaiian Kingdom was Alexander Liholiho, Kamehameha IV. His queen was Emma Rooke, granddaughter of John Young, the English sailor who became advisor extraordinary to the Hawaiian kings. Emma had been brought up in the English tradition; and when she and Kamehameha were married, together they gave impetus to the growing prestige of the English Church in Hawaii.

Through the constant urging of the king and queen, the English Church was finally established in 1861 with the consecration of Thomas Nettleship Staley as the first Bishop of Honolulu. Both their Majesties did much to further the work of the Church: the king gave a grant of land where St. Andrew's Cathedral and St. Andrew's Priory School for Girls now stand; they both encouraged the establishment of schools for their people; and they both worked actively to alleviate the misery of the sick and the poor. Kamehameha's deep and sincere interest in the Church is further emphasized by the fact that he made the first translation of the Book of Common Prayer into the Hawaiian language, thus making it possible for his people to share more fully in the services of the Church he loved.

Just before Bishop Staley arrived in the Islands early in 1862, the young Prince of Hawaii, only child of the king and queen, died tragically; and the whole kingdom was plunged in sorrow. The death of the king himself followed in little more than a year, leaving the queen to bear alone her double burden of grief. Proof of the strength and

calibre of her character was Queen Emma's dignified and purposeful life in the years that followed.

The queen continued in her love of the Church and of her people. She gave much time and thought to ways of educating the Hawaiians and of raising their standard of living. Among the institutions in which she was most interested were the Queen's Hospital, which she and her husband founded, and St. Andrew's Priory School for Girls. Both institutions are contributing much to the life of Honolulu today; for both exist in the spirit of Christian service for which Queen Emma is remembered. At her death the queen bequeathed a large portion of her estate to endow the hospital that bears her name. And it is interesting to note that only a few months ago at dedication ceremonies, the new million and a half dollar surgical wing of the Queen's Hospital was named in honor of King Kamehameha IV. The queen also left a yearly endowment for scholarships to St. Andrew's Priory, which was the fulfillment of her dream of a school where young Hawaiian girls could receive a "firm grounding in the Faith of Christ."¹

Priscilla Lydia Sellon rightly deserves an honored place among the great women of the world. She was the restorer after three centuries of the Religious Life in the English Church. She was a woman of vision, courage, and enterprise, a true pioneer. The strength of her personality and character is realized when one recalls that during the three hundred years between the suppression of the Religious Life in the Sixteenth Century and its restoration in the Nineteenth, many attempts to revive it were made but all of these attempts failed.

It is likely that Priscilla Lydia Sellon, daughter of a retired Commander of the Royal Navy, became acquainted during her early womanhood with Dr. Edward Pusey, leader of the Catholic Movement in the Church of England. In 1847 at about the age of twenty-six, she is believed to have

¹ Queen Emma's Letters, 1868. Hawaiian Church Chronicle—June, 1934

visited the Community of the Holy Cross in London, which had been established two years earlier under the leadership of Dr. Pusey, as the first corporate attempt to restore the Religious Life. It was on this visit that Miss Sellon "caught the first glimpse of that vision of Spiritual Empire which was to change the course of her own life and thereby to influence profoundly the development of women's work in England—in parochial work, in the profession of nursing, in social service, and in missionary adventure."²

Early in 1848 Priscilla Sellon undertook to go into the slums of Devonport and Plymouth and there live and work among a people wallowing in ignorance, squalor, and spiritual necessity. Such an undertaking was revolutionary at a time when women were expected to be active only within the shelter of the home. In October of that same year, encouraged by the Bishop of Exeter and Dr. Pusey, Priscilla Sellon consecrated herself to God in Religion and established the new Sisterhood of Mercy. Eight years later the Sisterhood of the Holy Cross was merged with the younger, more vigorous community; and Priscilla Lydia Sellon became the Mother

Superior of the combined orders, renamed the Society of the Most Holy Trinity.

During the next twenty-five years Mother Sellon was kept busy organizing, building, guiding, training. Not only did her community grow, but she threw herself and her order into all manner of work—nursing, education, social work, foreign missions. Her last foundation was a school for girls in the Sandwich Islands.

In the Hawaiian Islands (Sandwich Islands) Bishop Staley was giving much time and thought to ways of uplifting the entire social fabric of the land. It was his belief that Church boarding schools for girls, in which the latter would be trained mentally, physically, and spiritually, would be a powerful factor in accomplishing this. Thus in 1863 he appealed to Mother Lydia Sellon for Sisters to superintend a school for native girls, where they might be trained in Christian ideals. Needless to say, Mother Sellon took up the challenge; and the Society of the Most Holy Trinity has the distinction of being the first community of Anglican Religious to enter the foreign mission field.

² Thomas Jay Williams: Priscilla Lydia Sellon

The ylang-ylang arbor



Three Sisters were sent on this first venture to the Hawaiian Islands where they were kindly received. Bishop Staley wrote in a letter: "We, indeed all, even many outside our own Church, rejoice at their coming; with their long experience of trained nursing and education, they are valuable additions to our community . . . The King (Kamehameha V) and the Queen are delighted with them all."³ The Sisters were sent to the island of Maui where they took over the work among girls, calling the new institution St. Cross School.

The work at Lahaina, Maui, was so successful that Bishop Staley sent a request to Mother Sellon for more Sisters to establish a school in Honolulu. And in the meantime, the widowed Queen Emma, greatly pleased by the Sisters' success in winning the hearts of her people, sailed for England accompanied by one of the Sisters and two native girls. The queen's mission was twofold: to arouse interest among English Churchmen in the erection of a Cathedral in Honolulu and to support personally the Bishop's plea to Mother Sellon for additional Sisters.

Bishop Staley and Queen Emma were successful in their suit: the Reverend Mother promised to send more Sisters to Hawaii in the near future. In 1867, undaunted by partial paralysis, she set forth on the long journey from England to Hawaii with four Sisters and a travelling companion, determined to lead the expedition and superintend the new foundation herself.

The Reverend Mother and her party were met off Honolulu harbor by a tug bearing Prince Kalakaua (later King of Hawaii) and other chieftains, Bishop Staley and the clergy. The Sisters were offered the use of Rooke House, Queen Emma's girlhood home, as a residence while the Priory was being built. A small building on the Cathedral grounds had accommodated the few day pupils taught by the two clergy wives; and it was this house and these girls who served as the nucleus of the school undertaken by the Sisters. However the building was completely inadequate for a boarding-school and convent. Therefore Mother Sellon obtained permission to erect new buildings on a portion of land given by Kamehameha IV for the Cathedral, using seven thousand dollars from her own funds.

Excerpts from the writings of Sister Albertina make vivid the early days of the



Under the spreading monkey pod

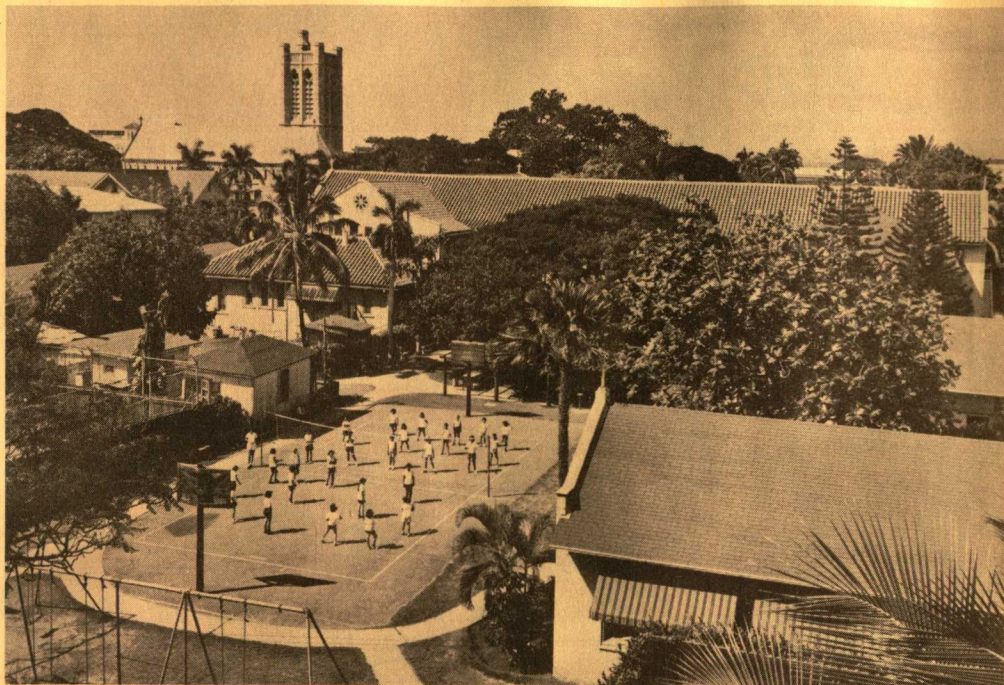
Priory: "When we returned to Honolulu (from a visit to the Sisters at Lahaina), the Reverend Mother continued her supervision of the Priory. It was built to accommodate a school and the whole arrangement was considered, at that time superior to any school in the Islands. In the centre was a cross of coral blocks and around it, forming a square, were the dormitories, the refectory, chapel and school room. The last was well fitted with desks and seats, but the household furniture was very limited, no chairs, only long benches to sit on, or the floor. Lanterns were the only lights in the dormitories and a few lamps for the other rooms. Iron spoons and steel forks ornamented the tables.

"The school buildings and grounds were dedicated on Ascension Day. Bishop Staley, the clergy, Queen Emma, many Hawaiians and foreigners assembled in the Pro-Cathedral. After a short service a procession was formed which proceeded to the adjoining Priory grounds. The Bishop and choir entered all the rooms, dedicating each in turn according to its use. The Bishop then stood

³ Bishop Staley's Letters. Hawaiian Church Chronicle —June, 1934



Priory Gate and Coral Cross



Aerial view of the Priory

on the steps of the cross and addressed the people."⁴

Queen Emma's friendship with the Sisters and interest in their work was unflinching. She wrote to Bishop Staley in 1868: "How can I tell you, dear Bishop, what these dear Sisters are to me, my greatest comfort in this world. They attend to the beauty and order of our solemn and dignified services, and are helping the mothers of my people to realize the love of God and that His Kingdom is coming to them, now and here in His Church on earth. Oh, how I wish above all that every child in my country could receive this firm grounding in the Faith of Christ, and so be armed against all temptations."⁵

The Sisters in turn accorded Queen Emma a deep and abiding love. When the very life of her Majesty was threatened in 1874 during a stormy struggle for the throne, the Sisters concealed her at the Priory until the crisis had passed. And in her last illness in

1885 she was lovingly cared for by her "dear Sisters."

The decade following the founding of St. Andrew's Priory in 1867 was fraught with many drastic changes. Bishop Staley resigned from the work in the Sandwich Islands and Bishop Willis came to take his place. Mother Sellon died in 1876, and Sister Bertha of the Hawaiian mission was named Mother Superior of the order. In 1878 St. Cross School on Maui was closed; and the Sisters there were transferred to the Priory, which had been growing by leaps and bounds.

Unfortunately the affairs of the Society of the Most Holy Trinity in England were becoming more and more difficult. Over-expansion, lack of novices, and financial losses finally forced the society in 1890 to give up the Hawaiian work. No new Sisters had been sent out for some time previous to 1890, and the deaths of two of the Sisters assigned to the Priory reduced the number left to two. These two Sisters, Sister Beatrice and Sister Albertina, felt that it was impossible to give up their work at the Priory "as they had many girls committed to their charge, and these could not be deserted."⁶

⁴Unpublished Manuscript of Sister Albertina. St. Andrew's Priory

⁵Queen Emma's Letters, 1868. Hawaiian Church Chronicle—June, 1934

⁶Bishop Restarick: Hawaii 1778-1920 from the View-point of a Bishop

Consequently they asked for permission to remain in Hawaii, offering to forego all financial aid from the society.

So for twelve years Sister Beatrice and Sister Albertina heroically carried on the work of the Priory. They kept the school going with the aid of their many Island friends and the small endowment for scholarships left by Queen Emma. The interest of Hawaiian royalty continued with the friendly relationship between the Sisters and Hawaii's last queen, Liliuokalani, who like her predecessor, Queen Emma, took refuge at the Priory, when her enemies sought her life during the revolution culminating in her dethronement.

The Hawaiian Islands were annexed to the United States in 1898; and in 1902 the American Church took over the Hawaiian mission from the Church of England. At that time the Sisters requested that the new American Bishop, the Right Reverend Henry Bond Restarick, assume responsibility for

the Priory School. When that portion of the school grounds vested in the Society of the Most Holy Trinity was transferred to the American Church, the latter guaranteed the support of the two Sisters as long as they should live. They retired to a small cottage on the Priory grounds and there lived in quiet happiness until they died, Sister Beatrice in 1921 and Sister Albertina in 1930.

Under Bishop Restarick the Priory continued in the same spirit in which it was founded. Unable at first to persuade any American religious order to take over the Priory, Bishop Restarick placed the school in charge of secular administrators. In 1909 the dilapidated condition of the school buildings necessitated a rebuilding of the Priory. The new school was moved to a corner of the diocesan church grounds; and the great coral cross, which is so familiar a symbol of the Priory, was moved from the old school grounds to the front courtyard of the new. Finally in 1918 the American Order of the

Preparing the Coral Cross for Ascension Day (Founders' Day)



Transfiguration accepted the call to Hawaii; and once again the Priory was in the able hands of Religious.

The Sisters of the Transfiguration, whose mother house is in Glendale, Ohio, have worked in Hawaii now for almost forty years. No less devoted to the work of building Christ's Kingdom than the English Sisters, they have taught hundreds of girls by word and example what it means to be a Christian.

Under these Sisters the school has thrived; it now numbers approximately five hundred students in Grades 3-12. The Sisters have encouraged the school to treasure its associations and connections with the historic life of the Islands, but they also believe in progress. In order to keep up with the times, they believe in taking what is best in our times, such as modern educational methods, and making these things a part of the school. The Priory of today, therefore, is both traditional and progressive.

The educational program at the Priory is designed to promote the welfare—spiritual, mental, and physical—of every student. It is designed to train girls to take their proper place in their communities as good citizens;

to train for *Christian* citizenship. Religious Education is not just another subject but is made the unifying force in school life. Daily chapel services in St. Andrew's Cathedral are an important part of the broad religious program. Other courses are designed to give the student the best preparation possible for either college or business; and extra-curricular activities are meant to give students training in leadership, character, and service.

During the forty years of their work at the Priory, the Sisters of the Transfiguration have brought about many changes and improvements at the Priory—in the curriculum, in the physical plant, and in school services such as vocational and personal guidance. But they still walk steadily in step with the founders of the school and hold high the same spirit of Queen Emma Kaleleonalani and Priscilla Lydia Sellon. Many a home in these Islands is the stronger for the ideals and principles of Christian womanhood instilled in the hearts and minds of those whom Queen Emma called "the mothers of my people".

Barbara H. Ching

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